

rhodesian history

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G. LIESEGANG

Aspects of Gaza Nguni history

B. A. KOSMIN

Asian trading patterns

M. E. LEE

Responsible Government movement

H. I. WETHERELL

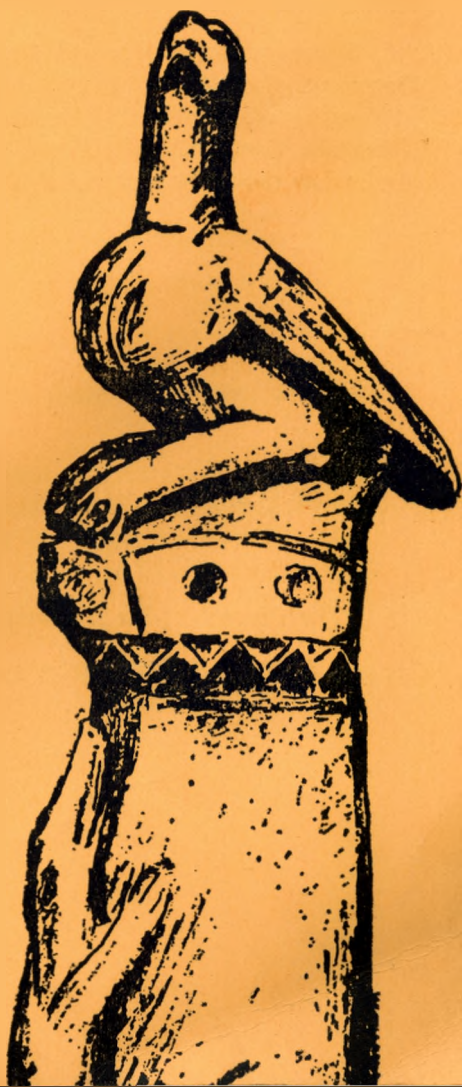
N. H. Wilson: Populism in Rhodesian
politics

Notes, Documents and Revisions

Essay Review

Reviews

Bibliography



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RHODESIAN HISTORY

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VOLUME 6 1975

Aspects of Gaza Nguni history 1821-1897. G. Liesegang	1
'Freedom, Justice and Commerce' : Some factors affecting Asian trading patterns in Southern Rhodesia, 1897-1942. B. A. Kosmin	15
The origins of the Rhodesian Responsible Government movement. M. Elaine Lee	33
N. H. Wilson : Populism in Rhodesian politics. H. I. Wetherell	53
NOTES, DOCUMENTS AND REVISIONS	
'Red Soils in Mashonaland : A reassessment' : Contrary evidence. R. M. G. Mtetwa; and A. J. Chennells	77
The Rev. E. T. J. Nemapare and the African Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1930-1950. C. J. Zvobgo	83
The relationship between the Gutu dynasty and the Mwari cult in the nineteenth century. R. M. G. Mtetwa	89
Mutapa : An alternative approach to the study of titles in Shona history. D. N. Beach	97
REVIEW ARTICLE	
The growth of the independent churches in Rhodesia. M. W. Murphree	101
REVIEWS	104
HUGHES <i>Duma Texts</i> by R. M. G. Mtetwa. <i>THE PIONEER</i> , Volume 3 by R. S. Roberts. CRAWFORD <i>Rhodesian Record</i> by R. S. Roberts. DACHS <i>Papers of John Mackenzie</i> by W. F. Rea. WHYTE <i>The Meikle Story</i> by R. S. Roberts. RANGLES <i>L'empire du Monomotapa</i> by W. F. Rea. <i>LIBERATION SUPPORT MOVEMENT PUBLICATIONS</i> by R. S. Roberts. CARY <i>The Story of Reps</i> by Enetia Vassilatos. RANGER and WELLER <i>Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa</i> by W. F. Rea. <i>RHODESIANA REPRINT LIBRARY</i> , Volumes 1-5 by W. F. Rea. SELOUS <i>Travel and Adventure</i> and MILLAIS <i>Life of Frederick Courtenay Selous</i> by R. S. Roberts.	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	116
NEWS	118

**'FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND COMMERCE' :
SOME FACTORS AFFECTING ASIAN TRADING PATTERNS
IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1897-1942**

B.A. KOSMIN

Research Unit, Board of Deputies of British Jews, London

*The men of my own stock:
They may do ill or well,
But they tell the lies I am wanted to,
They are used to the lies I tell;
And we do not need interpreters
When we go to buy and sell.*

Rudyard Kipling, *The Stranger*.

BETWEEN THE RHETORIC of the British South Africa Company's motto and the perceptive social comment of Kipling lies the dilemma of the minority trading group and its host community. In Africa the problem has been exacerbated by the fact that the rulers and the ruled have belonged to different races forming in effect separate societies. Until the 1960s the minority trading groups have had, in effect, to deal with two host communities, one of which controlled the legal and regulative process while the other constituted the internal market for goods and services. Nevertheless minority groups belonging neither to the dominant political group nor the subordinate majority group succeeded in dominating the distributive and retail trade in much of sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in 1965 85 per cent of general merchants in Liberia were Lebanese, while in the same year in Uganda 70 per cent were Asians.¹ The Tables in the Appendix to this article indicate that this pattern was not the case in Rhodesia, where even if the Jewish and Hellenic populations are excluded, the larger proportion of trade remained in the hands of the predominantly British settler elite. This difference arose from the historical influences which brought British control to Central Africa and established the differential pattern of white settlement.

The British South Africa Company's motto was an appeal to the mid-Victorian liberal-humanitarian precepts expounded for Africa by missionaries such as Livingstone. It was an inheritance of Livingstone's call for 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation' to be spread among the benighted inhabitants of the dark continent. It was assumed that Western religion, civilisation and 'legitimate commerce' were the forces to overthrow heathendom, savagery and the slave trade. The cynic may

¹ C.G. Best, 'General trading in Botswana 1890-1968', *Economic Geography* (1970), 46, 598.

picture the British harbinger of civilisation with his Bible in one hand and his order book in the other (and his Martini-Henry firmly placed over his shoulder). Nevertheless many well-meaning Britons firmly believed in the efficacy of commerce, and later railways, in bringing peace and prosperity to what they saw as the savage chaos of Africa.

However the logic of this approach meant that these amelioratives should stem from the source where they had reached their apogee. Thus beneficial results depended on there being British christianity, British civilisation and British commerce. In complete contrast Asiatic religion, civilisation and commerce, whether Arab or Indian, were just those evils which had caused the tragic situation in Africa as they were associated with slave trade and its concomitants. So in their efforts to restrict Asian penetration of Africa, particularly in the early days, the European traders could rely on the active support of the 'Exeter Hall' liberal-humanitarian lobby as well as their shareholders and the local administration. Throughout the period under review this attitude continued, and Asian commercial activity was regarded with suspicion as it was not considered to have the favourable economic and civilising effect or to provide the moral uplift associated with European, particularly British commercial penetration. Thus in the territories of Bechuanaland, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda and Nyasaland the local inhabitants, who were 'British Protected Persons', were shielded from these harmful influences by 'closed townships' and restricted areas. Southern Rhodesia, however, was not in the same category and all its inhabitants became British subjects after 1923; and as the majority of Asians were British Indians, it was very difficult within the context of Imperial politics to impose sanctions on one class of British subjects in the colony. Thus in the place of legal restraints such as restricted trading areas, or even the land-holding prohibitions of Uganda and Kenya, Asian commercial activity in Southern Rhodesia was hindered by a number of unofficial policy restrictions and social conventions. These were, however, sufficient, so that it was only in 1941 that for the first time over 50 per cent of the Asian work force was engaged in the commercial sector.²

² Asian population growth was as follows:

	<i>Number of Persons</i>	<i>Percentage Economically Active</i>	<i>Percentage of Females</i>
1901	556	no returns	11
1911	906	92	11
1921	1 250	70	18
1931	1 700	48	33
1941	2 570	38	39

Asian immigration was suspended in 1924 except for dependants of residents. For full bibliographical details of the Census returns from which these figures are taken, see R.S. Roberts, 'An historical bibliography of Rhodesian demographic data. Part I: Non-African Census Returns'; 'Part II: African Census Returns', *The Rhodesian Librarian* (1977), 9, (i and ii, in press).

The only major work on the Asian population of Rhodesia has been undertaken by social anthropologists, the Dotsons. They attempted to throw off the restrictions of structural functionalism and stress historical interaction and group conflict as a prime mover in social development. However, their work embracing as it did Zambia and Malawi and primarily concerned with cultural change and adaptation dealt only superficially with economic interactions in Rhodesia. Also their dependence on interview techniques and their lack of deep research and detailed knowledge forced them when trying to interpret Asian trading patterns to turn to facile explanations of racial discrimination and even to the supposed inherited commercial capacities of the Gujarati farmer for which they were somehow 'preadapted to an extraordinary degree'.³

The aim of this paper is to attempt to describe and analyse the political, social and economic realities of Southern Rhodesia as they affected Asians and to move away from superficial explanations and analysis such as that based on a 'happy combination of socially inherited capacity and the fortunes of history'.⁴ Nor is it considered worthwhile in the Southern Rhodesian context to debate the effect or otherwise of the supposed Islamic religious encouragement of commercial activity or the effects of Hindu asceticism on capital accumulation or its possible contradiction of economic quietism. There were other much more important and powerful influences at work than supposedly inherited cultural patterns which in practice can only come into play in a *laissez-faire* type situation where there are equal opportunities and access to power, skills and capital, among the different population groups.

The majority of the early Asian settlers were drawn from the small villages of Bombay Presidency and arrived in Africa with little capital. In the 1890s most Asians, Hindu, Moslem and Chinese, worked as market gardeners on small plots near Bulawayo, Salisbury or the larger mines. Some engaged in service industries practising their traditional caste trades as carpenters, laundrymen or cobblers. The growing European concern for protecting settler interests which increased with the volume of white settlement precluded the entry of Asians into the civil service or artisan employment. This was demonstrated by the successful opposition to immigration both of Indian and Chinese as mine labourers between 1901 and 1904, Sikh Police in 1905 and Indian sugar plantation workers, which was based on the fear that the replacement of African workers would be only the first stage in labour substitution. The settlers were concerned that governmental controls in the territory were not sufficient to prevent Asian occupational or

³ F. and L.O. Dotson, *The Indian Minority of Zambia, Rhodesia, and Malawi* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1968), 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

geographical mobility once they were inside the territory. This was shown particularly in the 1901 debate over a satisfactory compound system for Chinese labour. The early employment of Indians on mines, such as the fourteen Indian engine drivers at the Morven Mine in 1901, was eroded by white artisan union pressure;⁵ the result was that by 1921 there were only thirteen Asians in the whole territory employed on mines.⁶

As European farming activity increased, the viability of small scale Asian production on the typical one or two-acre commonage plots was undermined. The Asians' lack of capital and the reluctance of the Company Administration to sell them land precluded competition with the larger farming operations. Yet by 1898 there was no vacant land within 100 miles of Bulawayo except that held by the large land companies who would only sell at highly speculative prices, so that the acquisition of suitably located farms was out of reach of even a partnership or group of Asians. This situation resulted in a slow movement out of agriculture and into commerce. The percentages employed in agriculture between 1911 and 1941 fell from 22 per cent to 12 per cent, while those in commerce increased from 31 to 51 per cent.⁷ A common Asian pattern was to move into vegetable hawking, then the hawking of other goods, and when sufficient capital was accumulated into general dealing and finally wholesaling. This progression usually involved in turn geographical movement from the larger centre to a rural area, to a small township, and finally back to a major centre. Asian economic advance reflected this pattern: in 1922 there were over 50 licensed hawkers and 4 licensed importers, but in 1941 only 9 hawkers and 20 importers, and 80 per cent of the whole Asian population lived in the six municipalities. Asian involvement in commerce was necessitated by the pressure of circumstances as other fields of employment, agriculture, mining, civil service, artisan employment, were blocked by opposition from the dominant white settlers while such service occupations as waiters, barmen, hawkers and eating-house keepers came under increasing African competition.

⁵ Bulawayo Chronicle, *The Labour Problem in Rhodesia and Proposed Importation of Chinese* (Bulawayo, Argus, 1910), 84.

⁶ Southern Rhodesia, *Second and Final Report of the ... Census Taken on 3rd May, 1921* (Sessional Papers, A1, 1923), Table XXXIX.

⁷ The occupational structure of gainfully employed Asian males was as follows (by percentage):

	Agriculture	Commerce	Personal Service	Industry	Other
1911	20	27	39	8	6
1921	22	30	30	15	3
1931	18	43	18	16	5
1941	12	51	15	16	6

The movement into commerce which had been violently opposed at first by Europeans, as in Umtali in 1899,⁸ was aided by a change in the outlook of the settlers; with permanent settlement the British population adopted what can only be described as a rather atavistic outlook. There was a desire for large landholdings and the old mid-Victorian competitive and self-confident approach was replaced by a narrow, suspicious, selfish, protectionist mood which tried to organise society so as to protect the settler against alien competition in all spheres. Trading in which the Pioneers had enthusiastically engaged was affected by the growth of a populist or semi-fascist ideological outlook while at the same time the early idealism of a civilising mission declined. The 1912 Cost of Living Committee reported that 'popular opinion and public statement in Rhodesia "consider that the merchant is to a great extent a parasite ... while in many ways he is entirely superfluous"'.⁹ This was a complete reversal of earlier ideas on the efficacy and utility of trade and is in contrast to the eighteenth-century and early Victorian respect for the traders and merchant companies who had built and developed the Empire. Trading thus became an undesirable occupation particularly in the African market, because it involved close intercourse and relations with the subordinate group which was thought to undermine 'white prestige' and personal social standing. To some extent the settler attitude reflected the change at home where concern with prestige and social position exacerbated snobbery and class conflict, and where inertia, inflexibility and a distaste for innovation particularly in the economic and industrial fields were to aid Britain's descent from a position of unparalleled political and economic power to political and economic eclipse in only eighty years.

Table II of the Appendix shows this movement out of retail trade by the British element, which was particularly marked in the African market, in the years between 1902 and 1912. Thus the way was left open for the entry of minority trading groups with a different social outlook. In the long run however, the growing adoption of the predominant settler attitudes in the cause of social and occupational mobility by those Jews and Hellenes born or educated in Rhodesia meant that prior to African economic aspirations there was a potential vacuum in African retail trade which Asians could fill. The advances in Asian retail penetration especially in the years 1917-22 can be attributed in part to the slowing down in Jewish and Hellenic immigration, caused by political factors in Europe, and the reluctance of some younger persons in these groups to replace the older generation particularly in the

⁸ There was an attempt to put some Indian traders over the border into Portuguese East Africa which was led by two Justices of the Peace; police reinforcements were needed to restore order, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 6 Jan. 1899.

⁹ Southern Rhodesia, *Report of Cost of Living Committee* (Sessional Papers, 1913), 9.

owner-proprietor class of store. In contrast the strenuous efforts of the Jewish community in the late 1930s to provide places for Central European refugees affected Asian commercial expansion. Despite growing prosperity and the growth of the Asian commercial work force, the number of their stores hardly increased between 1937 and 1942. The number of managers and proprietors was 253 in 1936 and 267 in 1941, while male Asian sales-assistants increased from 137 to 205.¹⁰ This suggests a minor demographic crisis which would necessitate a change of approach; for the data suggests that the trend was not to establish chains of stores but to put younger relatives into business on their own account thus consolidating the small-scale nature of Asian businesses.

Before turning to the more obvious features of Asian locational trading patterns which are evident in the Tables in the Appendix, such as the almost total exclusion of Asians from the African rural area and the mines, it is useful to enquire into the political economy of Rhodesia to see how 'the system' worked. A good insight into the 'real Rhodesia' can be obtained by an investigation of the railway politics during the years of Company rule. Moreover in some ways the Jewish influence over Asian trading patterns was linked to this question, and shows the indirect effects of supposedly rational economic influences on inter-group relations.

The arrival of the railway in Bulawayo in 1897 established secure and efficient transport of goods and inaugurated a new pattern of trade in a country whose previous internal patterns had already been destroyed by the Rebellions in which relatively large numbers of early traders had been murdered or ruined. The new railway was an extension of the Cape Colony's network, and the line of political influence from the Cape ports to Kimberley, Mafeking and Bulawayo with an offshoot to Johannesburg paralleled the railway route. Rhodes's early ventures had involved him with the Cape merchants, many of whom, like the Beits, Lipperts, Mosenthals and Weils, were of German-Jewish extraction. The links between these big merchant houses and the mining industry in the early days of Rhodesia were very strong. Julius Weil, whose trading company provisioned Mafeking during the siege and Bulawayo during the Rebellion, was also chairman of the London and Rhodesia Mining and Land Company (Lonrho) owners of, among others, the rich Cam and Motor Mine near Gatooma. Given these social and financial links it should come as no surprise that a petition of complaint by Port Elizabeth 'Indian Traders of Mahometan Caste' at delays in obtaining permission to extend their trading operations to Rhodesia was rejected out of hand, and their applications delayed by

¹⁰ Southern Rhodesia, *Census of the Population ... 6th May, 1941: Part VI* ([Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1945]), Table VI.

the Company administration, so that European controlled merchant houses obtained firm control of the importing business.¹¹

Business links once established are usually quite durable and the next fifteen years were to see the Rhodesian administration use a multiplicity of stratagems in favour of their Port Elizabeth merchant friends and their wholesale agents in Bulawayo. When Salisbury and Bulawayo were finally linked by rail in 1903 the tariffs between the southern and eastern routes were set so that there was equipoise of cost at Gwelo, despite the fact that the town was only 492 miles from Beira but 1 475 miles from Cape Town, thus favouring the Port Elizabeth route. Moreover several key articles were cheaper to rail from the Cape to Salisbury than from Beira, thus aiding the Bulawayo import houses and favouring that town as a distribution centre over Salisbury and Umtali. The way-bill for 11 horses from Bulawayo to Gwelo, a distance of 113 miles, was at the Cape rate and cost £3.13s., while the same horses on the Beira and Mashonaland Railways from Salisbury to Gwelo, 188 miles, cost £51.14s. A nine-pound parcel cost 2s.9d. to transport from Cape Town to Gwelo and 3s. from Gwelo to Salisbury.¹² It is no wonder that there were complaints from Mashonaland that the whole purpose of the Beira line was defeated, nor should it be a surprise to learn that the chairman of the Rhodesia Railways Trust which fixed the tariffs was Alfred Beit.

Complaints and agitation led to an apparent equalisation of the rates at Bulawayo in 1905 but unfortunately a three per cent *ad valorem* transit duty in force at Beira was overlooked. Then during the premiership of Dr Jameson the Cape Government reduced the rates on the Port Elizabeth to Vryburg section of their railways while no compensatory reduction was made by the Railways Trust on the Beira line.¹³ Thus despite the growth and development of Mashonaland, its geographical position was nullified and imports, particularly most of the soft goods, the so-called 'kaffir truck', required for the African market, were brought in via the southern route. The Port Elizabeth route was also favoured by the better port facilities and the less time in transit. In 1911 delivery was made to Bulawayo in 12 days via Port Elizabeth and 15 days via Beira, and Port Elizabeth moreover was 6 days closer by sea from Europe whilst steamship traffic to Beira was irregular. There was thus a nine-day saving in time for goods and the associated savings in capital, credit and increased turnover. Another

¹¹ S1428/23 (High Commissioner, Correspondence, Southern Rhodesia, 14 Nov. 1889 - 12 Sept. 1902: Indian Traders, 29 Oct. 1896 - 14 Feb. 1899), *passim*.

¹² Rhodesia Railway Reform Committee, *The Reform Movement in Rhodesia* (Salisbury, Rhodesian Times, 1903), 6.

¹³ *Report of Committee of Public Bodies Re Railway Rates* (Salisbury, privately, 1912), 9.

hindrance at Beira was the inefficiency of the lighterage system and of the Portuguese officials, and the constant theft of goods, problems which continued until the 1940s. With the shift of political power to the settlers and to Mashonaland the railway rates progressively favoured the shorter route and by 1925 it was 25d. per 100 lbs cheaper to import via Beira at Bulawayo. Nevertheless household goods, food-stuffs and soft goods, were still coming in the proportion of four to one via South African ports.¹⁴ Thus as late as 1932 of the 208 importing firms in the Colony, 100 were based in Bulawayo, which reflects the importance of practical over economic considerations and the tenacity of historical trading patterns.

The European retail market was small; even in 1936 there were only 55 000 white settlers, and they expected long term credit and a high standard of service by 'gentlemen assistants' in well-appointed departmental stores like Haddon & Sly, Store Bros, or Meikles. In Salisbury, Umtali and Bulawayo, the early establishment of co-operative stores for the largest groups of European employees, the railwaymen and the civil servants, also served to restrict this market. This meant that most minority group traders, particularly Asians, had to rely on the African market which, anyway, provided a greater cash business and the larger turnover the undercapitalised immigrants needed. The proportion of stores owned by 'other Europeans' in the Tables might appear to contradict these statements but the figures include all the specialised stores in the main centres which were almost exclusively owned by this group especially in the early days, and they are inflated by the numbers of farmers and to a lesser extent miners who ran their own 'company stores' on their property. These were mostly small affairs run for the 'benefit' of their workers by the smaller farmers and smallworkers, an enterprise which was often aided by geographical situation and the restrictions on the movements of Africans imposed by legislation such as the Pass Laws and Masters and Servants Ordinance. Larger estates and mines normally put their trading rights up for tender and they were usually bought by Jewish and Hellene concerns.¹⁵

The predominant trading patterns were established at the time when the African market was most lucrative. Before the First World War the peasant economy was still viable and real wages were at their highest prior to the steep decline of the inter-war years which saw the pauperisation of the African population. In the four years 1909-12 it

¹⁴ Southern Rhodesia, *Report by Brigadier-General Hammond ... on the Railway System of Southern Rhodesia ...* (Sessional Papers, C.S.R. 2, 3 vols, 1926), I, 64 and *passim*.

¹⁵ A striking example is Libby's Extract of Meat Company on whose one million acres in south-west Matabeleland Landau Bros had sole trading rights; in 1913 the residents numbered approximately 3 000 Africans and 60 Europeans, N/3/16/7 (Chief Native Commissioner: Correspondence: Land: Native Tenants of Liebig's..., 4 March 1910 - 22 July 1919).

was estimated that £735 000 in specie was withdrawn from circulation and hoarded by the peasant farmers and by the 84 000 or so Africans in employment, even after their living costs and taxes were paid.¹⁶ The benefit from the African market accrued to the predominantly Jewish Bulawayo importers who controlled the 'kaffir truck' trade, the firms of Garlick & Fortune, C. Salomon & Co., Landau Bros, Matabeleland Trading Association, and Y. Pieters & Co. The hold these firms had on the African trade combined with Jewish group solidarity and intracommunal assistance meant that new Jewish traders could get promissory notes without collateral of £300 and up to £500 worth of goods on credit at a time when the reports on insolvency cases show Indian traders assigned their estates with debts of £160.¹⁷ In the case of mine-compound stores which were open to tender, from 1907 onwards more than 50 per cent were run by Jewish firms usually nominees of the larger merchant houses. Thus the early exclusion of Asian importers meant that Asian business activity was diverted to the more remote area of Manicaland and Victoria provinces where there were smaller markets and larger overheads due to transport costs which reached 9d. per mile in Manicaland in 1912. Thus in the farming areas and the small townships near the railways, particularly prior to 1914, there was a reduced proportion of Asian stores. This trend continued especially in Matabeleland where in all the townships of the Bulawayo Native circle only Gwanda with two stores contained any Asian businesses even in the 1930s. The trend was that where there was a greater Jewish presence there was a reduced Asian presence; a comparison of the ethnic trading patterns of Gwelo and Umtali or even Salisbury and Bulawayo as presented in Table IV shows this clearly.

The Asian exclusion from Matabeleland was in some ways self-imposed. The most important facet of African trading there was the hide and cattle business which was run in conjunction with general dealing and often consisted of barter of cattle for grain brought in by the traders from Mashonaland. This was also one of the most lucrative commercial undertakings, for the rail tariffs until the late 1920s were so organised that these were the only Rhodesian farming products which could be sold competitively on the Johannesburg market while there was also an export trade to Katanga. It is in this respect alone, perhaps, that cultural factors outweighed economic ones, yet they were overlooked by the Dotsons. Most Asians were Hindu Indians and they were reluctant to engage in what was for them a religiously proscribed occupation. The proportion of Moslems among the Asian population was 21 per cent in 1911 and 27 per cent in 1941 and they preferred not to compete in the cattle trade, and in Matabeleland they veered

¹⁶ K/5/1 [Customs and Excise Dep.: Reports: Annual] 3 (1913), Report of the Controller of Customs, 1913.

¹⁷ S1155 (High Court, Salisbury, Master, Insolvent Estates, I.R. Numerical Series, 1907-39), *passim*.

towards the running of African eating houses in the locations and on mines, another occupation which Hindus regarded as 'unclean'. In contrast, for the Jews from the Baltic lands cattle dealing was a traditional occupation. It is interesting to note that the few Chinese traders — Hon Eeson, King Handson, E.C.F. Joseph — congregated in Matabeleland and did very well out of cattle dealing so that they became mine and land owners on the profits. There was a system of licences for cattle traders and the returns for the whole Colony show that Asians held none in 1927 and only 2 (one a Moslem and the other a Chinese) in 1937, in contrast to the 172 licences held by Jewish firms and the 26 issued to independent African dealers.¹⁸

The rise in the numbers of Asian general dealers after 1917, particularly in the Mashonaland townships like Sinoia, Gatooma and Shamva, can in many ways be linked to the rise of Indian wholesalers and importers who gave credit more easily than Europeans with whom they had a reputation of decamping. Apart from Vashee & Co. most of the major import houses were situated in Salisbury and Umtali. The restrictions on Asian entry to South Africa and the fact that most goods from Europe came through South African ports prevented Asians making the personal social and business acquaintance of suppliers which is important in commerce. However, the First World War dislocated trade and the supplies of Lancashire cotton goods, Belgian woollens and blankets, and German hardware and ploughs which the African market absorbed. These sources of supply were replaced in part by locally produced South African products brought in via Bulawayo but also by goods from the East, from India, Hong Kong and Japan. In 1909 India supplied 1.5 per cent of Rhodesian imports, in 1920 4.2 per cent.¹⁹ These goods were imported by the most direct route via Beira and the Asians now had the advantage of historic and cultural ties with the new suppliers. India had become the Colony's sixth largest source of supply by 1930 and in 1937 supplied £210 000 worth of goods. It is noteworthy that 1930 was the first year that a majority of imports entered via Beira. The Indian goods were mainly for the African market. Only Britain supplied more cotton piece goods than India's £35 000 worth in 1937. India was the largest supplier of canvas footwear, totalling £37 000, and of waxes.²⁰

¹⁸ This process is shown by the fact that as the Indians (92 per cent of all Asians) moved into commerce, there was a corresponding movement out of Matabeleland. The percentage of Asians in Matabeleland was 66 in 1911, 51 in 1921, 42 in 1931. In contrast the Jewish population was steadily biased to settlement in Matabeleland — 61 per cent of them resided there in 1911 and 60 per cent in 1931.

¹⁹ K/5/1/2 and 8 (1909 and 1920), Report of the Controller of Customs, 1909 and 1920.

²⁰ Southern Rhodesia, *Annual Statement of the Trade of Southern Rhodesia... 1938 ...* (Sessional Papers, C.S.R. 5, 1939), Table I; *Review of the Trade of Southern Rhodesia ... 1938* (Sessional Papers, C.S.R. 6, 1939), *passim*.

The breakthrough made by Asians between 1917 and 1922 has been attributed in part to the reduction in Jewish and Hellenic immigration and the displacement of the old external trading pattern but there were other factors of importance. Many of the Greek storekeepers in Rhodesia were army reservists and after 1912 and the beginning of the Balkan wars they began to leave the country. This process allowed Indians to enter areas such as Penhalonga from which they had long been excluded, for the shops were left vacant and there was no-one else who could take them over after 1914 because an exceptionally large proportion of the white Rhodesian population volunteered for military service. The growing importance of India in imperial politics also inhibited settler and company obstruction in grants of licences and leases during the Responsible Government versus Union debate, for neither side wished to annoy the imperial authorities, who were under pressure from the Government of India to insert provisions safeguarding Indian voting and immigration rights into the 1923 constitution.²¹ The postwar boom which lasted until 1922 also allowed Asians to expand their hold. They were slowly beginning to invest their accumulated capital locally to expand business instead of sending it to India. The proportion of their capital exported before the War was exceptionally high; remittances by postal orders alone to India in 1912 were worth £7 842, whereas the Hellenes remitted only £344 to Greece and Turkey and the Jewish community sent only £991 to Tsarist Russia.²² This pattern was inverted in the purchase of town stands from the Company and government. In the 27 years from 1913 to 1939 Indians bought only 28 stands, the smaller Hellene population 115, and Jews 193.²³

An inhibiting factor in commercial expansion was the lack of group solidarity, in contrast especially with the Jewish population. There were of course real historical and cultural reasons for this, since although Asians were regarded as a unit by outgroups and the government there was no fellow feeling between the Chinese, Goans, Hindus and Moslems. The Dotsons stress the utility of the joint family system in reducing wage bills and obtaining loyal staff, but the system was weakened by caste, which contributed to the disunity based on language, religion and region and affected the intracommunal flow of capital; for the ban on intercaste marriage, even among Moslems who still retained vestiges of a caste system, prevented the sealing of business ties by local marriage alliances and close social relations. The trend to find spouses outside of Rhodesia can be contrasted yet again with the Jewish population where marriages between persons of different

²¹ Government of India, *Emigration Proceedings 1923*, Colonial Office to India Office, 12 Feb. 1923; I owe this reference to Professor H.R. Tinker.

²² ZAC/1/3/1 (Cost of Living Committee, 1912-13: Evidence: Telegram Books: General), *passim*.

²³ Calculated from L/7/1/1 and 2 (Land Settlement Dep.: Registers: Acceptances: Stands and Plots: Feb. 1913 - Dec. 1921, and Dec. 1921 - Dec. 1929): and from *The Government Gazette* for the years 1930-9.

national origins cemented local business ties, consolidated the local community and gave wider opportunities for access to loan capital, as the more established would stand guarantee for younger relatives. A study of Asian insolvency cases and the trustees' reports shows that Asian creditors were noticeably harder on their compatriots, even of the same nationality and religion, than were other groups. Moreover they were quick to level accusations of illegality and often tried to persuade a reluctant legal department to prosecute. In one case a dispute over land in India between men from the same village led to the break up of a business partnership and an attempt by one group to get their partner and his son deported by swearing affidavits that they had falsified immigration returns seven years earlier. Cases like this and a quarrel which resulted in the murder of a congregant by the Imam during a service in the Bulawayo mosque were not good public relations and served to reinforce the stereotype that other groups held of Asians.²⁴ This would also seem to challenge the Dotsons' claim of a dual ethnic and a *Gemeinschaft* morality among Indians, at least before the Second World War.²⁵

It was the stereotype of the Asian trader which justified his exclusion from the two largest and most lucrative African markets, the Reserves and the mines. In the case of the mines, it was thought that the Indians' fierce desire for gold (of which there is no doubt even today if one studies the world's free gold market) was such that they would at the first opportunity engage in illegal gold buying and subvert the African mineworkers to this end. How true this was is unknown, for it was never tested; and Sir Ernest Montagu, who ran the Mines Department under the B.S.A. Company, kept a particularly tight rein on the grants of stores near mines, a policy which Table III shows was strictly adhered to after Responsible Government. The belief was reinforced, however, by facts such as the establishment of stores by Indians in the middle of the bush just inside the Portuguese border. It was claimed that these stores were 'fences' for amalgam brought by home-going alien African mineworkers.²⁶ The higher Asian crime rate, which was normally 50-80 per cent higher than the European rate in the 1920s, was also used to justify Asian exclusion. The crimes were mostly for petty offences such as Sunday trading, and were common to most other immigrant groups who also had higher than average rates.²⁷

²⁴ D/3/32/10 (District Courts: Criminal Cases: Que Que: 1917), No. 358, Magistrate Que Que, Rex v. Kika Harri, 21 Jan. 1918; *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 27 Oct. 1917.

²⁵ Dotson, 7.

²⁶ S622 (Native Affairs Dep., Native Commissioner Mazoe, Correspondence, General 1923-32), N.C. Mazoe to C.N.C., 27 May 1925.

²⁷ Statistical information on charges and convictions by race and nationality were published annually by the Secretary of the Law Department (later Department of Justice) and are particularly useful from 1924; these reports are listed, but with considerable bibliographical error, in F.M.G. Willson and G.C. Passmore, *Catalogue of the Parliamentary Papers of Southern Rhodesia 1899-1953* (Salisbury, Univ. Coll. of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1965), 186-7.

Nevertheless such facts were grist to the mill for men like Montagu, the traditional 'white populist' small-workers, and rival trading groups.

There was some improvement in the Asian social position by the 1930s, possibly due to the end of settler fears of being overwhelmed by numbers, and a policy of wider acceptance of Asians that was being shown by membership of the Chambers of Commerce by the late thirties; nevertheless Asians were not able to get store sites in African rural areas. Indian Government pressure has been noted in the years after the First World War, and the refusal of a licence to Vashee & Co. of Bulawayo led to a personal letter dated 13 October 1934 to Prime Minister Huggins from Kunwar Sir Maharaj Singh C.I.E. This was passed on to the Chief Native Commissioner who composed a reply, a sort of Rhodesian Devonshire memorandum, which declared the paramountcy of African interests in their areas and the administration's aim of getting Africans to take over economic control there when they were ready.²⁸ This led to an active encouragement of African business enterprise by the Native Affairs Department from then on and the rise in the numbers of African-owned stores can be seen in Table II.

Throughout the period covered, the main arguments against an Asian commercial presence in the Reserves which were used by officials were merely a reiteration of the original arguments used by the early missionaries and administrators. These are best summed up in a letter written by Colonel Carbutt, the Chief Native Commissioner:

It is unfortunately true ... that the Indian is with us, but I think that if we can confine his activities to urban areas it will be all to the good. His standard of living permits of his competing on unequal terms with Europeans, and although he may not have a definitely criminal record, his methods of trading are not conspicuous for their unimpeachable fairness and his moral standards are not the best example to the Natives. He frequently indulges in miscegenation, and in the Victoria District, there is a considerable bastard population being raised. In the Bulawayo Native Location Indian traders were unfortunately allowed to obtain a footing, which gave rise to much criticism and protest by the Native population...

For the above reasons, if it can be reasonably done, I would prefer that Indian traders be not allowed to establish themselves in rural areas, where they come into almost uncontrolled contact with the indigenous Native population.²⁹

²⁸ S1542/59 (Native Affairs Dep., Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence and Other Papers: Store Sites, 1933-43), 1933-4, C.N.C. to Min. of Native Affairs, 14 Dec. 1934.

²⁹ S235/438 (Native Affairs Dep., Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence, Unnumbered Series, 1909-49: Miscellaneous Memoranda, 1938), C.N.C. to Chief Clerk, Dep. of Lands, 9 Nov. 1933.

This was the restrictive policy which had been unofficially practised since 1898; and the only Asians to obtain stores in the reserves, Ebrahim Dasita and King Handson, did so through the mistakes of junior officials who had not put the normal comment 'Asiatic' on the applications. Before condemning these arguments as discrimination or prejudice, however, it is useful to examine their reliability.

There is no doubt Indians lived frugally, probably because of their inability to socialise with Europeans: there was thus no necessity to adopt the European patterns of consumption that this would have led to. Moreover accumulated surpluses were sent to Asia, and due to marriage patterns the trend was increased with the transmittance of dowries and the tendency to holiday there. The problem would appear to be due to the fact that Europeans regarded Rhodesia as a permanent home and invested locally, while Indians were often 'target workers'. In the matter of miscegenation there is no doubt that proportionately Asians did indulge to a greater degree than Europeans. Of the first generation Coloureds in 1941 who had African mothers 799 had white fathers and 181 Asian.³⁰ This practice led to numerous complaints from the chiefs and articulate African elite groups. At an official indaba with the Governor at Umtali in 1929 the local chiefs complained that Indian traders who had shops on European farms bordering the reserves had 'places at the back of their main stores where only female native customers were admitted'. At another indaba in 1932 the Ndebele chiefs complained that Indian-owned motor lorries were used to transport young girls from the reserves to the towns to lead immoral lives.³¹ The African attitude was not an adoption of dominant group ideology but a reaction to a real grievance heightened obviously by resentment which arose naturally from a retail system which relied on bargaining and barter and not on fixed prices. Asian arrogance was as real as European in dealings with Africans, as the Secretary of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union stated during a speech at Bulawayo location in 1929: 'Friends, the Indians are making money out of you and then go to India with it all. They come back and still call you kaffirs.'³²

The relaxation of European hostility towards Asians came at the same time as a rise in African consciousness and economic aspirations. Even if the reserves had been thrown open, it is unlikely that Asians would have obtained sites, as the chiefs were given powers of veto under the new Letters Patent of 1937. Many used this power to try and remove European storekeepers and replace them with Africans.³³ So

³⁰ *Census of the Population 1941, Part VI, Table XIII.*

³¹ S138/22 (Native Affairs Dep., Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence, Numerical Series, 1923-33: Native Movements, 1923-33), Native Complaints, 1929; Native Complaints, 1932.

³² *Ibid.*, Masoja, Verbatim Police Report on I.C.U. Meeting, 20 July 1929.

³³ S1561/14 (Native Affairs Dep., Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence, General, 1909-49: Store Sites Applications, 1933-8), 1937-8, *passim*. This tendency was particularly marked in Manicaland.

despite their lack of contact with the majority of Africans, Asians were still regarded negatively and Africans began to adopt the attitude found in Kipling's verse. Moreover the articulate elite saw the Indians as an obstacle in the way of their advance until the full implementation of the Land Apportionment Act.³⁴ However greater African urbanisation led to more contact, and as the European trading groups slowly moved out of the African retail market Asians became traders in greater numbers, with the result that 67 per cent were employed in retail and wholesale commerce by 1956. The main political and to some extent economic problem for Asians was no longer relations with Europeans, who increasingly treated them with benevolent indifference, but an accommodation with the increasingly vocal African majority and its aspiring elite who led them into the postwar world. Only they could guarantee the long term 'freedom, justice and commerce' for Asians in Rhodesia.

The conclusion of this paper is that to see intergroup relations simply in terms of irrational prejudice and discrimination based on perceived differences is to detract from a process that is dynamic and comprises the interplay and interaction of groups, ideas and numerous variable factors. Thus the study of one group in isolation is of no real value. It is a truism to say that nothing in this world is static; but the fact of the constant potential for change in practices and ideas, although it may bring one to suspect the normative school and the model makers, is in itself a cause for optimism. Also historical methodology enables us to move beyond mere description, and by intensive research draw out an analysis of the processes at work which can perhaps be best interpreted in terms of challenge and response among individuals and social groups.

³⁴ The Land Apportionment Act of 1941 (No. 11) which applied to occupation in urban areas was most effective in protecting Asians against African competition as Asians were classified as Europeans in terms of this legislation.

The data in the following Tables was gathered from the monthly or quarterly returns of annual General Dealer's Licences issued, which were published in the *Government Gazette* until 1942. The announcement listed the licence and the full address of the shop (that is the stand number, name of farm, or if near a mine its name and the distance from it). A General Dealer's licence was necessary for any premises not otherwise licensed (for example, as a butchery, bakery, auctioneers, insurance company, or importer). A separate licence was necessary for each separate premises. For most of this period the only specialised retail outlets were in Salisbury and Bulawayo; elsewhere the 'general dealer's' store was found.

The classification of types of licences reflects the different types of consumer market and different forms of control:

1. Those on farms in the European area for which the owner's consent was necessary and with whom a rental agreement had to be made.
2. Those on African occupied land (Reserves, Purchase Areas or Crown Land). These needed the consent of the Native and Estates Departments.
3. Near rural mines or on claims or in compounds; that is within three miles of a claim or mine. For these the consent of the local mine-owner and the Secretary for Mines was necessary.
4. Townships, villages and settlements; for these the consent of the Estates Department and local authority if any was necessary.
5. The four main market centres of Bulawayo, Salisbury, Umtali and Gwelo; for these the consent of the local authority was necessary.

The Licence and Stamp Ordinance (No. 6) of 1901 established the licence fee at £10 (at which it remained), and necessitated two advertisements of the application in the newspapers to allow public objections to be lodged. All applications had to be consented to by the police as to the applicant's character, and by the Local Licensing Board established by the General Dealers and Other Licences Ordinance (No. 2) of 1908. The final veto and any appeal lay with the Administrator, or later the Governor-in-Council.

The calculations of ethnic groups are derived from the author's personal knowledge of the topic based on communal lists and archival sources including the actual applications; in the case of Africans all applications and advertisements included their Registration Certificate details. The classification is based on descent and does not signify membership of organisations. However in the Rhodesian context in the period under review the differences are negligible. The category Asians includes all groups indigenous to Asia (Indians, Goanese, Afghans, Chinese and Arabs). The few Coloureds identified have been completely

excluded from these calculations and Tables; for they never included more than half a dozen or so stores. Where companies or partnerships (such as the Matabeleland Trading Association, or the Mtoko Trading Company) and not individuals, were granted the licence, they have been classified with the group to which the majority of the partners or directors belonged.

The data therefore do not indicate numbers of individuals involved, or volume of trade in the hands of each group, but solely the number of retail outlets controlled by each group; but it is believed that they are adequate for the identification of ethnic, geographical, locational and marketing patterns, over the period.

Table I
GENERAL DEALER'S LICENCES ISSUED ANNUALLY
IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA 1902-42 BY
SUB-CLASSIFICATION AT QUINQUENNIAL INTERVALS

	1902	1907	1912	1917	1922	1927	1932	1937	1942
On Farms	132	169	237	208	361	538	585	578	534
In Reserves etc.	103	106	86	90	107	107	150	189	231
On Mines	37	69	121	98	65	63	61	93	63
In Townships etc.	84	81	175	178	240	287	268	372	347
In the four Major Centres	428	359	481	391	528	612	753	972	1041
TOTAL	784	784	1100	965	1301	1607	1817	2204	2216

Table II
**PERCENTAGE OF GENERAL DEALER'S LICENCES
ISSUED BY ETHNIC GROUP 1902-42**

	1902	1907	1912	1917	1922	1927	1932	1937	1942
Jews	23	24	34	31	27	23	22	23	23
Hellenes	3	6	8	9	7	8	8	8	8
Other	70	63	52	52	56	58	57	53	51
Europeans									
Asians	4	7	6	8	10	11	12	13	13
Africans	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	5

Table III
QUINQUENNIAL CLASSIFICATION OF ASIAN STORES 1902-42

	1902	1907	1912	1917	1922	1927	1932	1937	1942
On Farms		9	10	22	34	33	40	57	46
In Reserves etc.	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	-	-
On Mines	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In Townships etc.	-	7	9	7	40	47	48	69	72
In the four Major Centres	31	40	42	47	61	99	123	155	165
TOTAL	34	58	62	78	138	180	213	281	283
% OF ALL STORES	4	7	6	8	10	11	12	13	13

Table IV
GENERAL DEALER'S LICENCES BY ETHNIC GROUP
IN THE FOUR MAIN CENTRES 1902-42
 (i.e. municipality, commonage and suburbs)

	1902	1907	1912	1917	1922	1927	1932	1937	1942
SALISBURY									
Africans	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	14	21
Asians	3	17	18	22	22	45	63	63	76
Hellenes	13	20	33	13	26	29	28	19	22
Jews	35	28	63	30	40	34	43	80	91
Other	70	54	84	80	129	157	192	231	248
Europeans									
TOTAL	121	119	198	145	216	266	307	427	458
BULAWAYO									
Africans	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Asians	7	8	7	16	19	33	34	70	66
Hellenes	-	2	6	2	4	-	4	7	3
Jews	87	52	70	68	71	71	89	120	125
Other	127	107	136	97	137	147	206	222	257
Europeans									
TOTAL	222	170	219	183	231	251	334	419	453
GWELO									
Africans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asians	-	2	1	2	6	4	5	3	4
Hellenes	6	1	2	1	2	5	7	13	13
Jews	12	7	16	6	13	13	14	11	16
Other	14	13	12	19	19	19	33	31	35
Europeans									
TOTAL	32	23	31	27	40	41	59	58	68
UMTALI									
Africans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asians	21	13	16	8	14	17	21	19	19
Hellenes	7	10	3	9	5	6	8	4	4
Jews	4	6	3	1	-	-	-	3	4
Other	21	18	16	18	22	31	30	36	35
Europeans									
TOTAL	53	47	38	36	41	54	59	62	62



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